

The Fall of Reach Alternate Version

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Summary: An alternate Fall of Reach. This will start on chapter eleven Plus Prologue. Enjoy!

The Fall of Reach Alternate Version

****Prologue****

****1520 Hours, September 19, 2552 (Military Calendar) / Epsilon Eridani System, Airspace above Coorius outpost Alpha, planet Reach****

The Super MAC guns were the most powerful weapon in the human arsenal. The MAC â€" Magnetic Accelerator Cannon â€" was the main space weapon the humans had. It fired an extremely dense shell at such a high speed that it usually destroyed a ship on impact. However, it was the only space-based weapon that was not guided, so it required precise accuracy coordinates. The Super MAC rounds could punch through a Covenant's shields and still destroy the ship.

There were twenty of these super MAC platforms orbiting Reach. Since Reach was humanity's main military base, only Earth was better defended. There was always about 50 UNSC cruisers orbiting Reach as well, and their weaker, ship-based MACs could take out a Covenant cruiser in about three hits. The MAC platforms were always kept hot, so they could be fired on a moment's notice.

Presently, two dozen Covenant cruisers appeared out of Slipspace. They instantly began charging their plasma turrets, but before they could fire, the super MAC rounds were fired along with a volley of ship-based MAC rounds. All of the cruisers were destroyed in the first volley.

The humans recharged their MACs, and returned to their previous duties, so no one noticed when one abnormally small ship suddenly disappear from the debris and reappear between two super MAC platforms.

The two MAC platforms tried to target it, but it was too close to the planet for them to be able to. This cruiser had managed to bypass the human's defenses, and was headed into the atmosphere.

The elite Shnee 'Sinaammee studied the hologram before him. His kind were taller than any human could hope to be, averaging at at least 2 meters tall. He had an angular head, and his armor made his whole body appear to be more like a geometric creation than a person. It also made him look like exactly what he and all of his kind were – a very dangerous warrior.

"Interesting." He said to himself. "This planet is the most closely guarded human planet we've seen so far. I must alert the High Prophets, so they can send a larger army."

He ordered the loading of the dropships to begin.

"We shall take out their land defenses. They won't stand a chance. 'Rakaammee, you shall command this ship while I am on the surface."

Vagna, the Rogue Spartan, stepped off the pelican onto the cold hard soil of Reach. Like all Spartans, he had been trained from a young age to be in the military, and he was one of humanity's best warriors. He was almost 2 meters tall, and covered from head to toe in pure white MJOLNIR armor. He had been thought to be dead, and so he had left the military. He had received his MJOLNIR armor just before coming here, and now he had to rendezvous with the Master Chief, the leader of the Spartans.

Presently, he had managed to get past detection thanks to the help of Ghost VII, his AI. He knew that Cortana would have picked up his and Ghost's signal the moment they had entered UNSC space. He wasn't worried. In fact, he was hoping she did so she and John would come and see them.

"Hey Ghost, what's the status? Any signs of living beings near here?" He started to cover the pelican with branches and ferns so it wouldn't be seen from flying ships overhead.

"There are no life forms in this vicinity, but I am detecting UNSC encampments over the next ridge. I also do request caution as we do not want to be detected." Ghost replied.

"Thank you Ghost, stay on alert. Tell me if you detect any life form that approaches. I'm going to make our way over to those encampments and see if the Chief or Cortana is there."

He picked up his battle rifle and a pair of binoculars and made his way over to the encampment. He peered over a ridge and looked around. There was movement around the camp, which had several trucks and a few pelicans labeled Marines.

"You seeing this Ghost? Looks like they are doing a Marine training mission." Vagna whispered into the radio.

Lieutenant Junior Grade Jennifer Cozera read the script that appeared on the view screen. Hitting the comm. button, she hailed Sergeant Major Simmons, the highest ranking person among the ground troops in

the city of Coorius.

"Sir, something's shown up on the scanners, but it reads as a pelican dropship. I request a squad of marines to go check it out. Over."

A moment later, Simmons' voice came over the comm.

"Rodger that Cozera you have permission."

Jennifer called up the marines for her squad.

"There's an unidentified pelican dropship about 5 klicks from this encampment. Go grab some 'hogs, and we'll drive over there."

A minute later, five full warthogs drove out of Coorius.

Sergeant Avery Johnson watched his band of Marines whilst they did their combat training.

"C'mon Marines, look sharper!" He yelled. "The Covenant will rip you apart! Harder!"

The hot sun of Reach burned the dusty ground around the Marines and sweat trickled down the Serge's face. He wiped it off with his right hand and carried on accessing his men.

"It appears that they have some Spartans down there as well. I am separating the Chief's tracking signal from the rest; he will be much easier to find that way. I would also request secretly grabbing a warthog. We will need one for later missions." Ghost replied.

Vagna ducked below the ridge to give him better cover so he wouldn't be spotted. He reached a path leading down to the encampment. There was no way to get past the path with out being seen. He pulled back behind a tree to cover himself.

"Ghost, I need a way to get down to the encampment and to see the Chief."

"It seems they have the encampment guarded enough to slightly challenge my abilities. There's a set of hidden cave systems within the mountain, I would suggest hiding there and contacting the Chief. I have a lock on his reader so you can radio him on a private channel. Unfortunately, he is not here right now. He is nearby, however, and on his way."

'Sinaammee looked down at the army in the hangar bay. One thousand Covenant troops stood at attention.

"Begin boarding the dropships," he said to 'Johilanee, his second in command. "We will crush the humans."

Bracktanass, a brute, climbed into a nearby Covenant dropship. He was as tall as an elite, but stronger and not a bit slower. He personally did not like the design of the dropships; there was too much empty space between the two troop carriers on the sides. He watched the ground race towards him as the ship descended.

'Sinaammee watched the elite pilot the dropship towards the surface. The dropships were to deploy troops before the cruiser could get into

a position to activate its grav lift and spew out more troops. The target area was a valley close by. He saw on the viewscreen the figures of the first dropships dismounting their troops.

As Bracktanass stepped out of the Covenant dropship, he could smell some Marines near the area, so he pointed at two Elites to start a sweep of the area. They came back empty handed, so he headed towards the human encampment in a ghost " the Covenant's one-man speed vehicle. He spotted a strange human nearing a cave, and accelerated towards him.

"Ahem, Vagna? Look at 7 o'clock VERY slowly, your not gonna like what's behind you... I would suggest warning the encampment, even though you aren't allied with the UNSC." Ghost said.

Vagna turned around to face the largest beast he had ever seen riding a ghost. It was definitely a Covenant but of a type he had never seen before. He fired off a clip in the direction of the monster, missing but he knew it would at least help serve as a distraction and a signal to the marines below. Vagna turned and ran down towards the encampment. He entered it, and passed several soldiers who seemed stunned at seeing a white Spartan. He jumped over some logs on an obstacle course, and he looked around for the familiar suit of the Master Chief.

"Ghost, I sure hope you got a good picture of what that thing is. Master Chief!" he called out.

"I gathered some data on those 'things' from Cortana, they are referred to in the Covenant hierarchy as Brutes. They must not of been of good use for we have never encountered them before. I do request caution none the less. Master Chief is on his way. The whole encampment is alerted to the Covenant presence, so I think you should help them fight."

As Jennifer and the marines neared the pelican's location, one of the gunners yelled,

"There's a Spartan running into camp!"

Jennifer swerved to turn around, but spotted a bad sight. "Oh no, Covenant dropships! 10 o'clock!"

The sniper that sat next to her zoomed in, but restrained his urge to fire. She led her 'hogs up to the top of a small hill, and the blood ran cold in her veins.

"Alpha team, let's get back to the base."

Unfortunately, the Covenant army in the canyon had already seen them and begun firing as the humans floored it and headed for the encampment.

Bracktanass drove after the Spartan, but he spotted some of the human vehicles called warthogs. As Bracktanass drove his ghost toward the warthogs he thought,

Stupid hairless monkeys.

Once he got close enough to the warthogs, he opened fire with both

plasma cannons.

Suddenly, five chainguns went off simultaneously, and Jennifer drove wildly trying to get back to the encampment. A moment later, she heard rockets and sniper shots from the passengers ringing out. She was unable to look, but heard her gunner yell,

"Damn! We can't hit him!"

A moment later, she heard someone yell, "Ah! It burns!" and heard a warthog collapse.

Sirens rang through the camp, alerting Sergeant Johnson that they were under attack.

"Marines, grab your weapons and follow me! Let's give those Covenant bastards the welcome party they deserve!" Johnson shouted at his marines who immediately stopped training and grabbed their assault rifles. Sarge dashed to his desk. His sniper rifle was there, and so he picked it up. Resting it on his shoulder, he began to jog toward the front of the encampment.

"Chief, just to let you know what's going on, the rogue Spartan known as Vagna XIII is on his way down. I alerted his AI, Ghost VII, as to our position. Also, I think you should know that there was a massive drop-off of Covenant soldiers just outside the encampment. I believe the cruiser will stop and set up the grav lift there. They are primarily grunts, jackals, and elites, but there is also at least one thing known as a "Brute." If you decide to help fight these Covenant creatures, you might want to proceed with caution. Also, I'm picking up readings that a Lieutenant Cozera and her team of warthogs is retreating from the area of the main Covenant force. They might have been spotted." Cortana warned the Master Chief. Cortana was an AI designed for code-breaking.

Vagna heard the fire fight outside. Unable to get a hold of the Chief, Vagna sprinted back out through the tent past the Sergeant Major. Vagna had never seen the Sergeant Major before, and didn't really care to talk right away.

"Ghost, I'm going to take out some trees along the path. Alert the person in charge of the warthogs of my plan. If I can, I'm going to block the path of that brute and try and hop onto the ghost and kick him out."

Vagna ran up to a tree in the middle of the path and waited for the warthogs to pass until he knocked down the tree.

"Tell them to pass this point and I'll knock down the tree." Vagna began shooting the trunk of the tree to loosen it so it would be easier.

As Vagna hid behind the tree, Ghost contacted Cortana. "Hey Cortana, thanks for the info, but we need some help. How could I resist helping the infinitely best looking AI ever?"

From his position, 'Sinaammee could see the battle was fully underway.

"'Zilaammee," he said, "have some ghosts move up to support

Bracktanus. Go with them to make sure everything goes according to plan. Also, have six banshees prepared. I don't want too many infantry casualties."

Vagna felt two plasma bolts connect with the shielding of his armor. He turned around and two grunts were sitting ten meters from him. He fired off a few rounds to take out the pair of grunts. He ran up to the corpses and took one of their plasma pistols, placing it on his belt. Three elites, a jackal, and four more grunts came over the hill. He rolled back out of sight and hid behind a tree and waited.

A plasma grenade landed next to him, and he leapt out of the blast radius. He turned and fired off a clip into one of the elites, as heated plasma hit his shielding again. Vagna rolled again but this time drawing his plasma pistol. He charged it and fired at the second elite. He then pulled out his battle rifle and finished it with a trio of shots. A sudden smack to the back of his head reminded Vagna of the jackal and four grunts, and he hadn't even dealt with the third elite yet.

Vagna rolled to the corpse of an elite and picked up two of its grenades. He chucked one, but it bounced off a grunt. The grunt picked it up, primed it, and threw it back. Vagna ran and hid from it behind a rock. He activated the other plasma grenade the way the grunt had. He threw it at the grunt again but it caught the back of the jackal, who let out a scream and exploded, taking out the elite and two grunts with it.

To the remaining two grunts Vagna ran up, picked them up looked them in the eye. He threw them against a tree, knocking them out. He couldn't bear to kill them when he could just disable them.

"Come in Coorius outpost Alpha. This is Cortana. You are about to be flanked by the enemy. I repeat, the enemy is approaching on your six. I recommend you take out the scorpion tanks and at least set up warthogs to defend your flank. I'll try to call down air support."

Jennifer risked a quick glance behind her.

>One of the warthogs was melted in so many places she wouldn't have recognized it normally, and there was at least one marine still alive and trapped under the jeep. The ghost had completely avoided the volley of rockets and the sniper rounds, but had a lot of bullet holes from the chainguns. The ghost's occupant was a creature she had never seen before, but it continued to bombard them with plasma, although they were able to dodge most of it.<p>

Then, just as Jennifer turned her head to continue driving, she saw at least five more ghosts, driven by elites, come over the ridge.

"Keep shooting the wierdo!" She ordered the gunners. "Snipers, rockets, fire on the ridge!"

Jennifer heard a second warthog fall, and from her peripheral vision saw it smash into a Spartan that seemed to appear from behind a tree. She spun the 'hog around and leapt for the destroyed warthog as the Spartan struggled to his feet.

"Keep firing on that ghost!" She yelled.

Another volley of rockets went off at the creature's ghost, and dust sprayed into the air.

As Bracktanass fired at the Warthogs, he decided to play with them. He stopped shooting his plasma cannons and reached toward the back of the Ghost for a fuel rod gun. While he held it, he was having a hard time driving with one hand. He aimed the fuel rod gun and fired it, making a direct hit on a Warthog.

Bracktanass flew the ghost over the hill and he threw the fuel rod gun away so he could drive better. As he drove up closer to the warthogs, his ghost was hit by a rocket, so he leapt out and bounded off the ground to land next to a jeep. Bracktanass jumped onto the warthog, grabbed the gunner, and threw him as hard as he could.

After taking care of the gunner, he mounted the chaingun. As he fired the chaingun at the driver, the driver leapt out, only to be killed by an elite, who took his place.

"VAGNA! Watch out!" Ghost yelled into Vagna's speakers. The ruined warthog slammed into him, knocking him out for a few seconds. "Are you ok? Vagna? Oh thank god, check the warthog. There might be survivors!"

Jennifer grabbed the sniper rifle from the dead passenger's corpse, and spun around. She saw the monster somehow had survived the rockets, although his ghost hadn't. He was standing behind the chaingun of one of her warthogs, and an elite had just taken the driver's seat. The passenger leapt out, and rolled a frag grenade underneath it.

As Bracktanass fired the chaingun, he saw a grenade rolling underneath him. There was nothing he could do, and as the grenade exploded he was thrown into the air. He made contact with something, and he realized he had landed on yet another warthog. He grabbed the gunner and tossed him ten meters to his death.

"Reeves, GO!"

Jennifer yelled at the driver of the last warthog that had been untouched so far. He floored it back towards the base. That monster seemed to be unable to die as it leapt onto her previously occupied warthog, and as she fired two sniper rounds at the elite that struggled to rise. The marine who had rolled the grenade grabbed a dead marine's assault rifle, and charged the monster as it swiveled the gun at him. The last marine leapt out of the passenger's seat and ran away from the monster, towards the encampment.

"Yeah, I'm ok Ghost. Wow." Vagna watched as a warthog driven by an elite with a brute on chain gun drove back towards them. He jumped to try and grab the warthog anyway he could. He managed to get the driver's side doorway and started the rigorous task of pulling himself up to kick the elite out of the moving warthog. He pulled himself up and got a better standing as the chaingun in back shot at his shields. He punched through the now surprised elites head and felt his shields flicker and fail.

Vagna suddenly felt a moment of weakness as he threw the dead elite

out and took the driver's seat. The brute in back scared him, but he couldn't do anything right now without his shields. He turned the warthog towards the forest, directed it at a tree, and jumped out.

He hit the ground and rolled, managing to turn at the last second and see the warthog explode against the tree.

Vagna returned to the warthog to find the corpse of the dead brute. The brute had disappeared. Nothing except the burning wreckage of the warthog remained.

"Ghost, are there any marine survivors in this area?" He asked.

Jennifer watched in amazement as the spartan killed the elite she didn't even know had boarded her 'hog. She then saw him drive the hog into a tree.

"Thanks, Spartan." She said under her breath.

"It seems that a group of marines is being led by Sergeant Avery Johnson down that hill. But I have some bad news. The north wall of the base has just been breached. We don't have any hopes of taking it back, unless you have something to say about it."

"You got it" Vagna replied, checking his ammo. He was empty, so he dropped the rifle and took off to assist the marines.

As Johnson and his marines approached the scene of the battle, he could hear and see the explosions of Warthogs and the screams of marines.

On top of a hill on the other side of the battlefield, he spotted an elite, it's armor totally gold, giving out commands.

Sarge knew if that elite was killed then maybe they would retreat or at least be confused for a moment, Sarge lifted his sniper rifle up to his shoulder and looked down the scope. He activated it to 10X zoom and aimed on the elites head.

CRACK.

The shot rang through the battlefield and cut straight through the elites head. Purple blood shot out everywhere and a white and gold elite, which stood next to the commander, stared calmly at the corpse as it fell backwards on to the floor and blood splattered all over the ground.

The Sarge then lowered his gun turned to his marines.

"The fight's not over yet boys, follow me!" The marines followed Sarge down the hill into the thick of the battle.

Suddenly, 'Johilane's head exploded, as the sniper round hit him. 'Sinaammee turned his attention to the battle below. A group of marines was moving up the hill, off to the side. He turned and targeted the leader.

"They'll never know what hit them." He laughed to himself, and pulled

the trigger of the fuel rod gun. A green shot flew towards the leader of the pack.

'Zilaammee strafed to the right; ahead was a group of marines hiding behind some barricades.

"Someone take out a section of that wall." he yelled.

An elite beside him complied by pulling out a fuel rod gun and blasting a smoking crater in the side of the barricade. Several humans stepped to defend the hole, and they fired out of it with their battle rifles. All of the elites opened fire and melted the humans that were in the open.

"Charge!" yelled 'Zilaammee. He boosted through the hole, clipping a marine and taking his hand off. The ghost allowed him to enter the encampment before his elites, who followed him.

On his way down, Vagna picked up a plasma rifle and met up with the marines.

"You, are you Sergeant Johnson?" Vagna said to the Sergeant. "I'm here to help."

"Yeah that's me." The Sarge looked the Spartan up and down. He was very tall, and wore white armour.

"Help? Well by the looks of it we need as much of that as we can get. Lead the way son." Johnson then saw Lt. Cozera and a marine jog toward them. The Sarge, his marines and the Lieutenant then followed the Spartan back towards the encampment, which he could now see was on fire in many sections and the north wall had been breached.

"He's a bit short isn't he? As for tactics here, yours are limited. I would suggest manning one of those stationary turrets, given how close the Covenant are to us. I would set the turret to shredder rounds. But hurry, the battalion is just ahead!" Ghost said to Vagna.

'Zilaammee turned his ghost to the side. More marines were coming towards him. He slowly advanced, gaining speed. The leader of the marines pulled out a grenade. 'Zilaamme got to his top speed, as the marine pulled the pin and lifted his arm. Just as the marine was about to throw it, 'Zilaammee charged straight through the marines, and slammed into the one with the grenade. He cut him in half.

"Pathetic" he laughed to himself.

He heard the sound of metal on metal and looked down. The marines arm, still holding the grenade was lodged into the wing of his ghost.

Damn. He thought.

Jennifer handed her sniper rifle to the marine with her, and drew her dual pistols.

Vagna looked over at Johnson.

"I need a shotgun." He turned around and saw the turret explode.
"There goes your plan." He told Ghost.

Johnson switched weapons to his SMG; this was going to be close quarters and the SMG would come in handy.

"Ok, marines watch your backs this is going to be dangerous."

Jennifer, Johnson, and the marines hunkered down behind some cover and began firing at the elites, who poured through the wall.

"DAMN IT! Well the shotgun works too, but I was looking forward to some elites being shredded. Oh well. I am one gruesome son of a bitch, aren't I?" Ghost muttered through Vagna's internal speakers.

As 'Sinaammee was finishing off the stragglers of the marines, he looked towards the encampment. There was an explosion, followed by the shell of a ghost flying into the air.

"Our brothers need us." He said.

The group of banshees turned and headed towards the base. Several banshees let a round of green plasma fly. A shot hit a stationary gun, killing the marine that was manning it, and wounding several around it.

"Vagna! We got to get out of here. The rest of the survivors are evacuating now! We've got to get to the landing zone so Jennifer can take us out of here!" Ghost said urgently to Vagna.

"I'm not leaving with them and I'm not giving up. We can win this, I just need my shotgun." Vagna looked over to Johnson. "Don't loose this wall, I'm going to head to my ship and get my shotgun."

Vagna took off and headed towards the pelican. On his way, he saw out of the corner of his eye a elite in white armor with gold parts.

"Is that their commander, Ghost? Put a Nav marker on him so I can find him later, just in case." He reached the pelican and grabbed his shotgun. A moment later, a red arrow appeared on his Heads Up Display, pointing directly at the elite.

'Zilaammee looked up. The edges of his vision were blurred. As he slowly got up, he noticed that he was covered in blood and had several chunks of flesh missing from the lower half of his body.

'Zilaammee laughed. It was a miracle he had even survived, let alone the fact that there were no limbs missing. He was one lucky son of a bitch. 'Zilaammee turned back towards the fight and pulled a sword of his belt. He charged a marine, and bowled him over. 'Zilaammee stepped on the marine, killing him instantly.

"Pathetic, is this all they have?" he whispered to himself.

He looked around. They had conquered the humans so easily. 'Zilaammee was surprised the Spartans hadn't intervened. He climbed onto a crate and yelled,

"Come, we move forward, now!"

Jennifer took aim with her pistols at a mutilated elite who had just crushed a human. She took aim as best she could, and fired. His shields went down faster than normal. They must have just begun to return. The first shot alerted him, and he turned to face her, activating his sword.

'Zilaamme was completely surprised by the human. She had got him from behind. As 'Zilaammee turned, he pulled out a sword. Another shot pounded his shields. He jumped down, diving behind the crates he stood on.

Vagna started running back, firing blast after blast as he pasted though grunt, jackal, and elite. He saw Jennifer fire off a clip at a mutilated elite, and the elite turned to face her. He ran at the elite, who dove behind a crate, and tackled him to the ground. Vagna raised his fist up and brought it down on the elite's head.

'Zilaammee prepared to leap over the crate, but at the last moment, something slammed into him from behind. The crate shattered, and 'Zilaammee's sword went flying from his hand. Something slammed into his head, causing him to black out for a moment. With a surge of strength, he managed to wrestle onto his back. The person kneeling over him was definitely a Spartan. 'Zilaammee struggled to free one of his arms, and he reached out and snatched his sword.

"Prepare to die, human." He said, raising the deactivated sword to his chest.

Seeing Vagna tackle the elite commander, Jennifer reloaded and switched targets, taking out an elite who was keeping a group of marines pinned down. She took him out with repeated pistol shots, and her marine ally sniped a couple of elites to the ground.

Finally having reached the battle, The Master Chief leapt out of the warthog and ran down the hill. He fought like a wild thing, killing anything that got in his way. Making his way over to the base, he saw Vagna having a scuffle with an elite who held a sword to his chest. The Chief ran towards the elite, and leapt into it.

As 'Zilaammee was about to plunge the sword into the human's stomach, he heard approaching footsteps. He turned, and a second Spartan kicked his head. He tried to kick the Spartan who held him down, but the Spartan kicked his leg and held it down. The standing Spartan pulled a pistol out, put it to 'Zilaammee's head, and his visor went black.

'Sinaammee watched the banshees fly closer to the battle: "Begin the 'Zharhanee maneuver." He said.

"Yes, Commander" replied an elite.

Half of the banshees broke away from the pack. This pack would come in once the first run started, and that would give the first pack time to circle and start another run. This way, they didn't have time to respond to the first attack. Three fuel rod cannons fired at once, melting an entire building. The second volley took out a pair of

cubicles that the UNSC had made to replace old-fashioned fabric tents.

"No time for chit-chat. Vagna, come with me. I'll explain on the way." Master Chief said hurriedly. As the two Spartans ran, the Chief shouted across to Johnson:

"Hold the enemy here. We're going to destroy that ship." He pointed to the Covenant cruiser that was rapidly deploying troops via its grav lift. "Lieutenant Cozera, do you copy? This is the Master Chief. Get to your pelican. We need you to fly us to that cruiser. Over."

Jennifer and her ally hunkered down, and she slammed a fresh clip into each pistol.

"Can you pilot a pelican?" She asked him.

"Yes ma'am, although I ain't too good."

"Good. Follow me."

They ran through the battle to Jennifer's pelican. Leaping into her seat, she told her marine friend to man ops. She started a brief pre-flight diagnostics and strapped in

"Hang on Spartans, this'll be a tough ride."

She ended the diagnostics and lifted off, heading for the Covenant cruiser.

The two Spartans reached Jennifer's pelican. They braced themselves for the quick takeoff they were hoping for, as Jennifer called back to them, telling them they were leaving. Nine marines mounted up and checked their weapons as the ship took off.

Vagna was a little winded from the battle with the elite. It hadn't been a normal elite he had fought; it had been better trained than the others. Vagna checked his ammo in his shotgun and refilled it.

"I need another gun, something long range." He muttered to himself.

He turned to face the Chief.

"The Covenant will be back with more forces you know. Judging from their size and numbers, this was a scout party doing random Slipspace jumps." Vagna prepared himself, looking around the pelican for any battle rifles or snipers that he could grab.

"There's a sniper rifle with 30 rounds in the weapons locker above you." Ghost told him.

"So Chief, what's your plan?" Vagna asked.

"This." He replied, taking out a HAVOK tactical nuke.

"We insert this, with a countdown timer on it set to one minute, into the cruiser's grav lift. It's sucked up, and then detonates inside

the Covenant ship. The ship's shields will keep most of the explosion inside, and then it becomes the world's biggest frag grenade."

Jennifer flew the pelican out over the encampment. The moment she was easily visible in the air, the squad of banshees homed in on her.

"Marine, you got control of the nosegun." Jennifer told him. "Fire at will."

"Aye aye maam." He replied.

The chaingun went off, and Jennifer struggled with the joysticks to dodge plasma fire. Dodging the fuel rod cannons wasn't so tough, but the plasma cannons were difficult to avoid.

"Port!" Jennifer yelled, and the pelican dodged left. Because she had warned her copilot, however, the gun continued firing on a banshee, finally turning it into a ball of flame. The banshees fired again and flew under her for another pass.

As the banshees neared her belly, Jennifer yelled to everyone in the ship,

"Hang on!"

She flipped the joysticks and hammered on the jets, turning the pelican into a sharp nose-dive. The pelican slammed into a pair of the weaker one-man fighters, and caused the tops to cave in on the pilots. The remaining three banshees made as sharp a turn as they could to find out the fate of their allies.

When they had turned around, Jennifer was bringing her pelican back up. Three fuel rod cannons went off, and hammered on the pelican's port side. The two humans in the pilot's cockpit were jerked forward, and a chunk of the tail and the left wing melted under the fire of the superheated plasma.

"Shoot the banshees!" Jennifer screamed, as the marine targeted one of the Covenant craft and the ship began to lose altitude. She fought fiercely with the joysticks, and flew straight towards the valley with the grav lift in it. She could feel the plasma cannons burning through the tail of her ship, and knew that there would be no way for her to get through this alive, with all of the Covenant infantry around.

Suddenly, she completely lost control, as various monitors and screens blared at her.

"Spartans, we're going down. All systems failing. I'm going to take us into a direct collision course with the base of that grav lift. You better be ready."

The pelican barely made it over the top of the ridge, and somehow the second volley of fuel rod cannons missed her tail. Jennifer guessed it was because there wasn't a tail to hit.

The pelican crashed into the ground at the base of the grav lift, her straps snapped, and she blacked out.

'Sinaammee watched as the banshees fought with the pelican. Once the pelican began falling towards the Covenant's valley, he called out to the banshees:

"We are going down into the valley. Is everyone's active camouflage working?"

"Yes, sir." An elite replied,

"Excellent." 'Sinaammee thought to himself.

"Chief? Chief! Can you hear me? Can you move? The others... the impact. You need to get that nuke into the grav lift. Vagna is still alive, I'm getting the bio-readings from the other people in the pelican now. You and Vagna have to move NOW!" Cortana called to Master Chief.

"Vagna, take the nuke. Leave the rest to me." The Chief said to Vagna. Pulling Cortana from the back of his helmet, he handed her to Vagna.

"Say goodbye to Cortana for me, she'd understand. I need to do this. For Earth." He said, pulling two MA5B assault rifles from the overhead locker.

Without looking back, Master Chief jumped from the wreck of the pelican. Landing straight in the middle of Covenant troops, he blasted grunts aside and cleared a path to a large boulder. Climbing on top of the boulder, he stood defiantly and emptied all his ammunition into the enemies.

Then, when his ammo was spent, he hit an elite on the head with one rifle and grabbed the elite's energy blade. Roaring like a rabid monster, Master Chief lay waste to any Covenant who dared to approach.

But he could not avoid the fact that he was completely outnumbered. There were far too many Covenant, so he leapt aboard a ghost and smashed all those who got in his way. The Covenant army gave chase, but the infantry soon fell behind. Only those on vehicles could keep up.

Vagna crawled out of the pelican. Master Chief handed him the nuke, and he attached it to his right upper arm. He took out his sniper rifle and waited for the Chief to charge out into the middle of the Covenant before he made his move. Vagna crawled out as the Covenant attacked the Chief, and spotted three hunters guarding the grav lift.

These monsters were huge, and appeared to be fitted in old, medieval plate armor. They held huge metal shields of an unknown alloy, but it could reflect projectiles and seemed to be immune to plasma fire. The hunters also had a fuel rod gun integrated directly into their armor. Needless to say, these monsters would be a challenge. Luckily, two of them were facing away from Vagna, and a single sniper round to their unprotected backs served to take them out of action.

The third hunter charged its fuel rod cannon and raised its shield to protect itself from fire.

"I'll take this one out by hand, for the Chief." Vagna said to Ghost.

He set down his sniper rifle, and charged at the hunter. The hunter's fuel rod cannon fired, and Vagna barely had time to dodge. The green plasma flew over his head as he ducked under it, but the explosion it caused instantly dropped his shields to zero. Vagna dove to the side of the hunter, and spun his leg at its back. The hunter fell forward and smashed into the ground. Before it could get up, Vagna stepped on it, and applied pressure until he heard the Covenant soldier's spine snap.

He couldn't afford to just sit around and let more elites drop down from the ship, so he set the nuke to one minute countdown and threw it as hard as he could into the upper reaches of the grav lift. He had to run through the inside of the grav lift to get off, and as he ran through, his body started to lift off the ground.

He was almost to the other side as his shields began to recharge, and he made it, falling 10 feet back to the ground.

"That was a close one, now let's go. We got 1 minute before that thing explodes." Vagna took off towards his pelican.

"Jen, don't expect to pick me up, don't even look for me. Today you have never seen me. The Master Chief planted the bomb and should be returning to base shortly." He said through his communications mike as he reached his pelican.

"Ghost, cover our exit with a sensory jammer. We will return later. I know the Chief is out there, and he is still alive. We have to leave."

Vagna strapped himself in and lifted off from the ground.

He flew off into the sunset.

Suddenly, he remembered that he had forgotten to drop Cortana off with the UNSC. He put Ghost into the pelican's AI slot, and as Ghost drove, he moved to the back with Cortana in hand.

As they flew a low sweep over the encampment, he dropped Cortana into Sergeant Major Simmon's cubicle.

The Spartan and the AI then flew off into the sunset, this time for real.

Jennifer Cozera saw colors flash before her. They came into focus as she saw a black dot leave a blue pillar and vanish inside of a giant blackish-bluish form.

She jerked back to full consciousness as she realized that that was a nuke and it had entered the Covenant cruiser. She struggled out of the ruined cockpit, and looked around.

The Covenant was in absolute chaos. The troops were running around wildly, while a Spartan cut through their ranks with a stolen energy sword. He suddenly ran for a ghost, and Jennifer saw three banshees flying towards her. They fired their plasma cannons, and she ducked

and rolled aside. One of them swooped down lower than the rest, and she leapt for it. She managed to grab one of the bars that made up the banshee's wing, and her momentum swung her next to the cockpit.

Jennifer slipped her hand inside of the cockpit, and grabbed onto a 15cm bar that came loose to her pull. There was a switch on it, so she flicked it. An energy blade shot out and skewered the elite driving the banshee. Jennifer lifted the hatch enough to throw out the elite and take its place.

The other banshees immediately opened fire, and Jennifer had lost movement in her left arm. She figured it was from having it jerked so hard when she grabbed the banshee. Jennifer grabbed randomly at a joystick in front of her, and jerked it to the left. She managed to dodge the initial round of fuel rod cannons, but the banshees then opened fire with their main plasma cannons.

She looked at the display, and saw a hologram of a banshee receiving repeated plasma hits to the left wing. Simultaneously, the hologram's grav pod vanished, and she realized that her grav pod was gone also.

She piloted her stolen craft as best she could away from the cruiser, and just as she got to the top of the ridge, she felt a wave of heat wash over her back, and felt her last grav pod melt. She lost all control, and she saw that the two fuel rod cannons had taken out her grav pod and most of the top of her banshee.

The moment she hit the ground, she pressed a holographic button, and the ship shut down. She had no idea how she had known that that was the button to shut down the ship, but she didn't dwell on it.

Immediately afterward, she felt a shockwave run through the ground and heard a loud explosion. She lay there, waiting for either the imminent death from superheated plasma, or the sound of human warthogs or pelicans.

'Sinaammee was on the top of the ridge when he saw the explosion.

The Covenant ship boiled, as the ship's shields held the explosion inside. Ruptures flew through the ship like wildfire, and the ship began to tilt sickeningly.

Several dropships could be seen leaving the ship. For a moment, it looked like water that had just reached its boiling point—Then it exploded. The ridge underneath him shook wildly, and shrapnel skewered the dropships, and rained death on the ground troops. Fire reigned in the valley, and the shockwave knocked 'Sinaammee to the ground. He rolled down the hill, away from the exploding cruiser.

The ridge protected him from the giant pieces of the cruiser that came hurdling at him at a zillion miles an hour. Before he had a chance to get up, however, a piece of the cruiser rolled down, and slammed him in the head.

'Sinaammee was out before his mind had registered that he was

hit.

Sergeant Major Simmons saw a huge flash of light from his position at the encampment.

"That was the Covenant's cruiser!" He murmured, amazed.

"You, marine! Get in the back of that warthog. We're going to mop up the rest of the Covenant." Simmons yelled, jogging towards an empty warthog.

They drove around the perimeter of the valley, but found nothing except debris. On the inside of the valley, there was only fire and glass. As they drove past a wreck of a banshee, the gunner yelled,

"Sir, there's someone alive in that thing!"

"Fire away." Simmons replied. "That's what we're here for."

"No, sir, it's a human."

"What!" Simmons spun the jeep around.

Jennifer Cozera climbed wearily out of her banshee. She held her SMG in her hand.

"Ma'am, it would be best if you got in here and let me drive you back." Simmons said, seeing her weariness.

"Aye aye sir." Jennifer stumbled over to the hog, got in the passenger's seat, and fell unconscious immediately.

Simmons drove as fast as he could back towards the base.

'Sinaammee awoke to the sounds of a dropship. He sat up and looked around. To his left, was what remained of the valley, a kilometer-wide crater. To his right, a dropship hovered. Several elites leapt out and loaded 'Sinaammee into the dropship.

Inside, he found that the only other survivors were a score of elites and Bracktanans, the brute.

"Take us out of here." Bracktanans ordered the pilot.

They promptly flew out of the atmosphere and into the debris field. There they waited for the Covenant's sure attack on Reach. Reach Would Fall.

13

End
file.